



THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

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NEW YORK, NY 10021

October 15, 1986

JOSHUA LEDERBERG

PRESIDENT

Dr. Luca Cavalli-Sforza
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Dear Luca:

I am so grateful to you for your confiding in me your very moving account of your steps in your career that led into bacterial genetics. I will keep this in my private files. I hope that you will deposit this and other material in the Stanford University Archives with whatever restrictions on access you feel are appropriate. For my part I will inflict on you an autobiographical account that Harriet Zuckerman and I have been working on for some time. In due course I will be adding some still more personal material, that is not ripe for publication, in the near future.

Can I persuade you to add a little more detail to your recorded reminiscence, whether or not you wish to share the product with me or anyone else at this time? Some of the questions that came to my mind included your earlier family and educational background and interest in science. How was this established in the first place? Were there seminal individuals who had some role in shaping your interest at an earlier age, like the part that Francis Ryan played for me?

It is impossible, while reading your account, not to have questions about what it was like to be growing up in pre-war and war-time Italy. I realize how apolitical you have been; but would you wish to record anything about the environment of fascism and how it impacted, if it did, higher education and other institutions that are related to science.

I was struck that you were able to travel to Germany to do basic science during the height of the war! This suggests that there was something less than the total mobilization of that economy which is the image I had had. How was it possible for more basic scientific interests to continue in that setting?

Dr. Luca Cavalli-Sforza
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About your relationship to Fisher, I will see if I can dig up any material from my own correspondence about that. There is a page or two in Box's biography. It's obvious that he was actively looking for someone to investigate phenomena of crossing over and segregation in microorganisms. This may have stemmed in part from my own encounter with him at Woods Hole in September 1947. We had a fairly intense conversation about bacteria; and of course I was looking for guidance from him. I even had a rather jejune contribution to make to the symposium at which he presided (which was the founding of the Biometric Society).

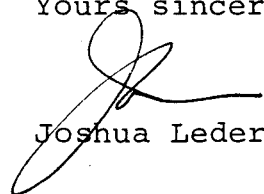
You mention the offer to come to Stanford in the 60s. Was I not already pursuing you circa 1955 or 56 to come to Wisconsin?

I am sending you some review material about Max Delbruck in which the name of Schrödinger comes up as well as Timofeef-Ressovsky. Do you remember whether Schrödinger ("What is Life?") was an important name in your intellectual environment? Just where was Timofeef at that time? Do you recall?

I was going through the files to try to retrieve the 1941(?) symposium where Bunting had the paper on color variation. I remember it quite well; but I did not have it right to hand. That made me realize that contrary to my expectation I could not find a complete bibliography of your own papers and I wonder if you would care to send me a copy at your convenience.

About your overall remarks: I hope you don't underestimate the legacy of what you did leave behind at Pavia, which would have been immensely poorer if it were not for your own influence on that. And, who knows, the CNR laboratories at Pavia, and then beyond them the International Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology at Trieste, should be put into the credit account as well.

Yours sincerely,



Joshua Lederberg

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